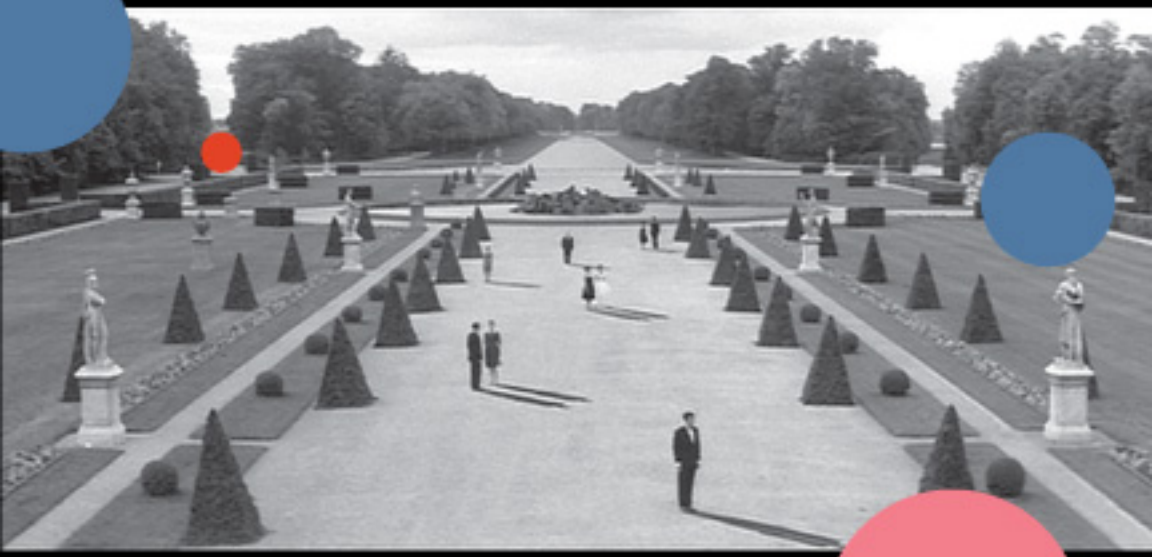
WHERE FILM MEETS PHILOSOPHY



Godard, Resnais, and Experiments in Cinematic Thinking

Hunter Vaughan

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FIVE

JEAN-LUC GODARD AND THE CODE OF OBJECTIVITY

Nothing is more subjective than an *objectif* (lens).
—Béla Balázs, *L'esprit du film*

In the previous two chapters I have examined the construction of subject-functions *within* the text. Alain Resnais experiments extensively with this construction in order to challenge conventional assumptions concerning the division between individual and collective, interior and exterior, real and imaginary, as a function of the human characters of his films and also as a function of film as a medium. By altering and subverting the code of subjectivity, Resnais focuses film signification on the immanent field in which the form itself engenders a dialogic interaction between subject-functions, producing experiments in cinematic thinking that break down conventional subject-object dualisms to pose a philosophical inquiry into the nature of time, mental imagery, and communication. But what of perspective bereft of subject, or what I would call the objective pole of representation? In posing this question, I return to some of the primary problems of this study. Having devoted the previous two chapters to the ways in which film codifies different subject-functions, let me now consider the attempt to remove subjectivity from the text, to present the image as nonsubjective or, to put it simply, as *objective*.

The claim of cinematic objectivity has a long tradition rooted in the scientific origins of film. Edgar Morin argues that cinema was born "to

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study the phenomena of nature,"[1] and Siegfried Kracauer makes a similar argument about the scientific basis for cinema. In *Theory of Film* Kracauer details the camera's historical connection to the development of "scientific potentialities," tying the evolution of camera technology to the industrial pursuit of a mechanized reproduction of the objective world.[2] André Bazin, however, argues quite vehemently against this historiography,[3] and I would agree with his conclusion that, regardless of its historical roots in the sciences, cinema quickly went askew from this purpose, becoming a commercial industry primarily used for the production of fiction films. In other words the quest to study natural phenomena had many fractured interests at the same time: a desire for knowledge, technological innovation, and commercial gain. It is thus that Jean-Louis Comolli finds it necessary to challenge the distinction between cinema's scientific inheritance and its ideological inheritance, concluding, nonetheless, that this scientific origin can be seen as a definitive factor in the mythology of a neutral cinematic image.[4] I situate this book largely alongside theorists such as Comolli, though again I will avoid going so far as to advocate any necessary connection between film form and a particular ideological position or political regime. Nonetheless, I will conclude inevitably that a study of film codes, connotation, and the immanent field logically must lead toward an implication of wider sociocultural values.

Critics such as Comolli and many of his contemporaries (Baudry, MacCabe, et al.) worked to dispel the myth of cinematic objectivity, a project in film theory that I have argued to be concurrent with more widespread intellectual attempts to deconstruct any epistemological model in which the viewer and viewed are irrevocably divided—in other words, the Cartesian or classical myth of the detached subject, the subject that is not itself in the world but exists on the inside of a binary separating the interior from the exterior. Godard's oeuvre, like that of Resnais, chronicles the disillusionment of this very myth of the detached subject. Godard's films raise questions about how the camera *sees* and how its meanings are structured to a high degree on the differentiation signified in the act of *looking*; the lens, as Balázs points out, is extremely subjective, and Godard finds numerous ways to turn that lens on itself, to explore this very subjectivity at the heart of cinema's objectivity. This reflexivity is not limited to the level of content or denotation; as Deleuze writes, with Godard "reflection rests not only in the content but also in the form of the image."[5]

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Much in the way that scholars theorize (erroneously, I have argued) Resnais to have cultivated psychological realism into a new code of subjectivity, many critics claim that Godard's formal enterprise offers a new type of objectivity. Godard's constant antinarrative engagement with nonactors, in unscripted situations and through anti-illusionist forms, has led many to champion Godard for an ethnographic mode of representation that claims to describe rather than to explain, to witness rather than to judge, returning to certain methodological premises fundamental to phenomenology. Discussing Godard's connection to other aspects of 1960s culture such as the New Novel, Guido Aristanco describes modern literature and cinema as being definable according to the paradigm of "voir" rather than "expliquer," *to see* rather than *to explain*.[6] But doesn't this raise a familiar paradox? Is this not replacing one myth with another? Did we not see a similar problem inherent in the debate between Bazin and Eisenstein, as if one image-type were more or less signifying than another? As I have argued, there is no denotation without connotation.

We have seen that with *Vivre sa vie* Godard inherited a firm belief in the objective capacity of film, its ability to reproduce the sensory world *as it is*. I will argue here that Godard demonstrates an equal if not overriding awareness of film being built from certain codes, an awareness especially of the connotative basis for purporting to represent the world *tel quel*. Indeed, his work during this period could be described as a constant struggle between, on one hand, a desire to use the camera to reveal some truth in appearances and, on the other hand, a certain duty to reveal the constructed base of cinema, to turn our attention toward the operations of the immanent field itself. In his oeuvre I hope to reveal the complexities of an ongoing reflection on the code of objectivity and what is ultimately not a new form of objectivity but, instead, a destruction of the classical philosophical binary upon which the notion of objectivity is based.

The Code of Objectivity

As we saw in chapter 1, the objective essence of film's reproductive act is implied through the illusion of natural perception created primarily by the camera mechanism. This process has, of course, led to many theories of film, such as those of Bazin and Metz, which take phenomenology for their basis and assume the camera to be a type of perceptual reduction. In a similar manner Morin claims that the history of photography

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imposes objectivity on the cinema. In other words the camera itself is objective. From this principle Morin postulates an equivalence between "the impression of reality" and "the objective truth."[7] But is this objective characteristic of film representation built into the apparatus, or is it a denial of its presence? The preservation of cinematic objectivity relies, after all, on the ability to hide this apparatus, to guard the impression of reality through codes of denotation that are meant, in complete circularity, to demonstrate the medium's essential objectivity. This argument returns us to the myth, perpetuated by Bazin and Kracauer, of the camera—the cold, precise machine, expertly constructed and performing its function without the sentimentality of human intervention.

Grounded in the notion of its being a mechanical capture of the visible world, this ontological characteristic of photographic representation led to the reification of the machine as a form that could bring humanity closer to the objective world. Stanley Cavell's claim that photography "satisfied a wish . . . to escape subjectivity and metaphysical isolation" is unmistakably relevant here.[8] This machine supposedly provides us with a special, direct connection to nature itself: the immanent field replaces the subjective human intermediary with the nonsubjective camera. As Bazin writes: "For the first time, nothing but another object imposes itself between the initial object and its representation."[9] But this notion of film representation carries with it a fundamental belief in how the immanent field *should* be organized, and such a reification of the camera-subject makes use of a connotative system built according to a specific differentiation between the looking subject and the object being looked at.

This fundamental division between viewing machine and viewed object has intertwined the connotation of objective representation with stylistic aspects of cinematic realism.[10] Bazin, that most ardent supporter of cinematic realism, was perhaps the greatest champion of objectivity in the history of film theory. While acknowledging that cinema is entirely staged, Bazin holds that, because of film form's essential roots in the photographic camera, cinema is both obligated and destined to serve an objective function, to reveal, as a result of its own detached structure of subject-object relations, something pure in appearances. As Dudley Andrew writes about Bazin: "He was the most important and intelligent voice to have pleaded for a film theory and a film tradition based on a belief in the naked power of the mechanically recorded image."[11] I outlined in chapter 1 how, in "Ontology of the Photographic Image," Bazin traces the history of the

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film image as being genealogically related to cultural-anthropological tools of reproduction. However, the pure mechanistic nature of the camera separates photography and cinema from other methods of representation. In the mechanical apparatus of the camera, Bazin ventures, we have finally found a truly objective means of reproduction. He consequently incorporates into this objectivist argument a very high praise for certain formal dynamics—such as depth-of-field and the absence of montage—that would codify film aesthetics according to the ontological debt that, Bazin claims, the photographic image owes to reality.

A major factor in the claim to film's objectivity is the camera's preservation of depth-of-field in the form of perspective, a perfect example of how the formal structure of representation becomes the legitimization of some metaphysical ontological relation to reality. An integral part of my analysis of the phenomenological subject and the frame in chapter 1, depth-of-field preserves what is arguably the fundamental connotative purpose of perspective: the centering of the frame as a viewing subject-position to which the image refers and, yet, which it also effaces. Seeking a historical genealogy for this practice in cinema, theorists from Bazin to Baudry trace the codification of visual depth back to the introduction of perspective in Renaissance painting. Bazin accords depth-of-field a special place in his arguments for cinematic realism, claiming that it allows for spatial complexity and thus provides the representation with a certain ambiguity inherent in natural perception.

More ideologically skeptical theorists, such as Baudry or Comolli, argue that perspective essentially frames the image as reducible to one central locus of meaning: the camera-subject as ocular reproduction of the world.[12] Baudry's analysis, and later that of Heath and many other critics, owes much to the conclusions of Erwin Panofsky's seminal work, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, in which Panofsky describes perspective as the connotation that a picture or image is like a window on the world, and "we are meant to believe we are looking through that window."[13] In other words this formal construction effaces the fact that it is a formal construction, suggesting that the reproduced image is a particular type of image, pure re-presentation built with scientific precision: "perspective," Panofsky writes, "transforms psychophysical space into mathematical space."[14] This transformation is a code, which Panofsky ultimately postulates as an organization of the immanent field according to a certain composition of subject-object relations.

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Although Panofsky is writing about painting, not cinema, one can draw distinct connections between his approach and the theory of film proposed by Rudolf Arnheim. Arnheim, a gestaltist much like Merleau-Ponty (Arnheim would, in fact, publish an article titled "Gestalt in Art" in 1943, two years before Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*), argues that film form is not an imitation or duplication of its source, but is "a translation of observed characteristics into the forms of a given medium."[15] Perspective is one of the elements of this translation. Taking this in more of an overt ideological direction that echoes Barthes's theory of mythologies, Baudry claims that the construction of this "window" is based on the effacement of the technical base that produces the images being seen.[16] This effacement is necessary to place the spectator in the position of the camera: to offer the image as something that has not yet been exposed to philosophical judgment and thus to render the illusion that any critical capacity for what is being seen is held by the spectator. I recognize this illusion, which I have called denotation, as the target of Resnais's deconstruction of the code of subjectivity, and it is similarly revealed and deconstructed in Godard's oeuvre. After all, as Resnais claimed, and we must always acknowledge, this is cinema.

The effacement of the connotative structuring of film representation has been central to the tradition of documentary cinema. For the modes of film representation both extolled and, subsequently, deconstructed by Godard, one need only look at the films of Robert Flaherty, John Grierson, and Jean Rouch, in which the documentary forms of ethnography and social realism forged particular modes of representing the world *objectively*. In this tradition representation is divided strictly between the apparatus-subject (including the filmmaker) and the viewed object, a division meant to imply a certain authenticity to the representation and an innocence or neutrality in the rhetoric of the message. It is indeed this claim to objective detachment—detachment both from the referential content and from any rhetorical stance—that has, from Dziga Vertov to Michael Moore, rendered the documentary genre the most fertile ground for propaganda.

The early documentary was part travel guide, part newsreel. "The cinema launches itself in the world and becomes a tourist," Morin writes in summarizing early theories.[17] Cinema was to be a way of coming to know distant lands, of bringing the foreign closer: accumulating knowledge of the representational content structured as visual object. The first

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development of this code, for both stylistic and economical reasons, championed the stationary camera, the long take, and, later, depth-of-field, formal elements for which Bazin would praise the realism of Renoir's and Welles's fiction films.[18] Such a historical perspective reveals that formal characteristics of the documentary genre often cross over into fiction film's attempt to give the impression of authenticity, the claim to truth. Thus, a code of denotation is developed for "documenting" the real and is then adopted for giving the illusion of reality in a variety of genres. Remarkable cinematographic similarities can be found, for example, between English kitchen-sink documentaries of the 1930s and the connotative codes of Italian neorealism in the 1940s, a historical echo confirmed by Bazin's observation that "since the war, cinema has assisted in the obvious return to documentary authenticity."[19] With the evolution of cheaper and more mobile equipment, documentary practices later reversed their technical attributes, adopting a more flattened image produced in naturally lit situations by a handheld camera to mimic the aesthetic of nonprofessional home movies being made on the streets with cheaper and more mobile technology. Heavily influenced by such documentary filmmakers as Jean Rouch and the aesthetic known as *cinéma vérité*, the directors of the New Wave co-opted many of these technologies and techniques, including high-speed film stock, the handheld camera, and the discursive mode of the direct-address interview. Indeed, these devices remain stylistic connotations of objectivity today, in such different contemporary movements as reality television and the Dogme 95 manifesto, as well as in mainstream fiction films that require the illusion of reality for optimal spectatorial affect, such as the thrillers *The Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez, 1999) and *Cloverfield* (Matt Reeves, 2008).[20]

But cinematic objectivity is not easy to define: it is a certain implication that emanates through the immanent field—a connotation. As Cavell notes, cinematic objectivity is a "mood in which reality becomes reified for you, a mood of nothing but eyes, dissociated from feeling."[21] This idea of a "mood" is not far from what I have discussed more specifically as connotation, in which the structure of representation connotes the image as being a certain *type of representation*. This structure is the result of a particular organization of subject-object relations, in this case a differentiation between the viewing subject-function ("nothing but eyes") and the reified object of representation. Once again I return to one

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of my preliminary debates: this aspect of the apparatus's being "dissociated" generates, in Bazin for example, a hostility toward montage. Eisenstein's entire notion of montage involves the contrary: a process of *association* that stirs a feeling in the spectator. It would be erroneous, however, to think that the evocation of an objective gaze is not rhetorical in practice. This issue of the connotative foundation of cinematic objectivity forces me here to confront a larger cinematic and extracinematic question that has loomed like a shadow across this entire study, a question concerning the social, political, and ethical ramifications of these practices. In addressing this issue, I will gradually begin to point this study toward the horizon of a larger application of my conceptualization of film-philosophy, one that *does* implicate more widespread systems of thought and extends to the cinemas of different directors, nations, and eras.

The notion of objectivity in cinema—being tied to ontological assumptions about the photographic camera, the early scientific pretense of cinema's birth, and various documentary traditions—belies problems in film theory that have been most clearly raised concerning the identity politics of representation.[22] Postcolonial theories of film and media, for example, enact a connotative analysis of the appropriation of the exotic or foreign as a visual other, signified as an object in relation to the viewing subject. This returns me to the Althusserian critique of epistemology mentioned in chapter 1, a critique that will resurface in this chapter's analysis of Godard and the objectification of women in film. MacCabe and Mulvey tie the objectification of women to cinema through the "problem of sexual difference and of the alienation endemic to capitalist society,"[23] a problem that is central to Godard's investigations during this period. Looking at Godard's structures of representation, I will argue that this "difference" and "alienation" are inseparable from the "mood" of objective representation and that postcolonial, feminist, and other such approaches can be articulated according to the theory of film connotation and subject-object relations established in these pages. This alienation is the separation between viewing subject and viewed object, between origin of meaning and article of information, which serves as the basis for *Vivre sa vie* and is in various ways overturned via the dialogism of the immanent field in *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*.

Based on the notions of epistemology and the scientific and documentary roots of cinema sketched out so far in this chapter, one could say

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that the goals of cinematic objectivity can be traced to a desire to understand the essence of something by perceiving it. Conjuring aspects of Bazin's ocularcentric interpretation of phenomenology, Godard expresses this goal when he talks about *Vivre sa vie*: "How to show the inside? Well, by resting wisely outside."[24] However, the object in this case isn't just the natural world, but a person. And not just a person, but a type of person with a socially, culturally, and economically defined identity. A 1960s working-class Parisian woman. In *Vivre sa vie* Godard applies a classical notion of cinematic objectivity to the fictional inquiry into a woman's existence, permitting her a certain narrative agency but not a full interaction with the camera, turning her a sympathetic ear and yet a cold gaze. In a historical sense one could deduce from this an alignment between Godard and other filmmakers who have applied a similarly detached form of representation to the filming of female protagonists, including Dreyer, Bergman, and Bresson—all of whom, as can be gleaned from his writings and films, influenced Godard heavily. This positioning of the visual other as the gaze's object, this structure of differentiation between the perspective of the image and what it is an image of, is fundamental to the code of objectivity, a code whose formal elements connote an empirical relationship, a distance, between the apparatus and the world it represents.

This distance is something that Godard eventually abandons in *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*. In fact, one can detect a major shift as early as the film immediately following *Vivre sa vie*: *Contempt*. Though he is deeply implicated at times in its preservation, Godard arrives at a reformulation of the code of objectivity that ultimately deconstructs its central premise of differentiation. I will discuss this in my analysis of *Contempt*, which Wheeler Winston Dixon describes as "a turning point in Godard's career," demonstrating "a new depth and tragic maturity not present in the director's earlier efforts."[25] Just as we have seen with Resnais and the code of subjectivity, Godard manages to embrace and to expose the code of objectivity as a myth, to reveal the formal conventions beneath it and—as does Resnais—then to offer an alternative to it, built around the recognized implications of the form's presence, a focus on the connotative level of meaning: an experiment in cinematic thinking that opens the viewer to new possibilities concerning our interaction with the image, the world, and ourselves.

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Jean-Luc Godard and the Code of Objectivity

The code of objectivity can be understood as the systematic connotation of a detached subject-position, an organization of the immanent field in such a way as to imply that the image is the product of an apparatus that rests outside the immanent field, giving the impression that what is being seen is not even a representation but is a direct observation of the ostensive photographic referent. Just as we saw in the last chapter's analysis of Resnais, Godard challenges every aspect of this code, from its individual formal characteristics, to its formulation of a linear narrative structure, to its process of removing all signs of its own production, to the philosophical vertebrae of its order of meaning. In *Breathless* (1960), *A Woman Is a Woman* (1961), and *Alphaville* (1965) Godard directly confronts cinematic genre and cliché, exposing the underlying determinations of the cinematic illusion. Then, with films such as *Pierrot le fou* (1965) and *Week-end* (1967), he wages an all-out war on illusionary film representation and narrative artificiality. Last, in films such as *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* and *Masculin féminin* (1966) one finds the complete transition from a deconstructive, antinarrative mode to a fully reflexive form that both reveals the structure of representation and grants a subjective voice to its object.

During this period Godard increasingly conflates the separation between subject and object and opens up the immanent field to a dialogic interaction between elements and agencies. The visual depth of the image is minimized, and characters look directly into the eye of the camera. In films such as *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* and *Contempt* the differentiation between diegetic subjects is diminished just as is that between subject and object of the image. Such effects blur the division between viewer and viewed, speaking and spoken. As Peter Wollen puts it, Godard's films "can no longer be seen as a discourse with a single subject,"[26] can no longer be traced to one unilateral source of representation. Despite previous maxims to the contrary, Godard ultimately rejects the myth of camera objectivity, viewing this objectivity rather as a characteristic produced by certain subject-object relations. Godard sets about to reveal this connotative foundation of cinematic objectivity through a number of formal practices.

One of these formal practices is the flattened image, as in *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*. Depth-of-field, Mitry points out, functions ac-

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cording to the illusion of total or full spatial perception, an image-type self-referentially connoting itself to be "observational perception."[27] In the flattened image, however, the distance between viewing subject and viewed object is spatially reduced, drawn closer. This conflation of visual space shocks the viewer out of the comfort provided by the conventional differentiated relationship between viewing and viewed. I need not resume here my entire discourse on depth-of-field; suffice it to remind the reader that the flattened image issues a rejection of the connotations that emanate from depth-of-field's organization of subject-object relations. Brian Henderson suggests that this subversion is typical of Godardian politics: an attack on, and demystification of, bourgeois modes of representation.[28] Regardless of whether it is antibourgeois or not (Godard himself could hardly be labeled proletarian and his films' political messages, at least during this period, are ambivalent), it is certainly a subversion of mainstream conventions. Indeed, the flatness of the image reveals and, in revealing, destroys the very illusion of natural perception offered in classical cinema, while at the same time secreting a new code for objectivity: the flattened image as ethnographic truth, in which the immanent field brings the source of representation and its content together in one shared dialogic space.

Indeed, many of the ways in which Godard deconstructs the code of objectivity are, themselves, new connotations of cinematic objectivity, much the same as Resnais deconstructs the enclosed diegetic subject-function in order to construct a new mode of psychological or subjective realism. I must reiterate, though, that through the frequent transformations of the immanent field in their films these directors refuse to validate either old or new code as anything absolute. For Godard this invalidation comes about in numerous other ways, including camera movements such as the enclosed shift I introduced in my analysis of *Vivre sa vie*, involving just a slight movement (either a pan or lateral tracking) of the camera from side to side. This manages to exclude one person from the image, always implying an incompletion to the dimensions offered by the camera mechanism, while connoting a sense of detachment from narrative meaning. It is an objectivity that acknowledges that the limitations of its images are defined by its formal base—an objectivity that nullifies its objectivism.

The connotations of this effect are further exaggerated by the lateral tracking shot. Taking on absurdly epic proportions in *Week-end*, Godard's

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tracking shot opposes itself to the tracking shot used by Resnais. Whereas Resnais's tracking shot escapes the X-axis of movement, opting for the vertical thrust of a forward-moving point of view, Godard's lateral tracking shot refuses the Z-axis of space instead, further flattening the arena of visual representation to two dimensions. However, like Resnais's tracking shot, and as with what I will call the spiral tracking shot of *Contempt*, Godard's tracking shot is not motivated by any one character, nor does it move as if linked to any particular narrative action. This refusal to align the camera with any diegetic element leads Henderson to remark that Godard's lateral tracking shot "serves no individual and prefers none to another."[29] This effect provides a certain openness or liberty to the image's movement, denying any narrative catalyst for the displacement of the camera. Henderson claims that the tracking shot and flattened depth provide an image that "cannot be elaborated but only surveyed,"[30] though I will argue that Godard subverts this very claim to observational sterility. I will also argue, however, in agreement with Henderson, that Godard *does* deny the connection between these forms and any single subject-function. We can begin to trace a theme in these formal tendencies: Godard refuses the totality or continuity that would signify one particular subject-function, foregrounding what Comolli calls Godard's "refusal to privilege one sign over others";[31] or, in Deleuze's Bergsonian terms, Godard refuses to select a system of reference. Like Resnais, Godard organizes the immanent field to produce a semiotic ambiguity resisting conventional hierarchies or structures of subject-object differentiation. This ambiguity is extended to the relationship between formal elements, such as camera movement and depth, speech and image, or the moving camera and the cut.

David Bordwell points out that another effect of the tracking shot, or long take in general, is to emphasize "the interruptive function of the cut."[32] This brings to light Godard's focus on the relationship between shot and montage as a way of foregrounding the arbitrariness of the form in relation to the actual object being represented. That is to say, Godard uses editing to dispel the implication that what the spectator is given is anything more essential than the selection of the filmmaker, a necessary but arbitrary organization of the immanent field based on the limitations of the form. This can be seen in Godard's signature editing technique: the jump cut. The jump cut is probably Godard's most well-known formal experiment and is produced simply by dropping frames within a

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continuous shot. The result is a shocking break in the continuity of the moving image: the image seems literally to jump, like a skipping record, revealing the constructed nature of film representation and implying that even the camera itself cannot offer a transcendental, unified subject-position. As Heath puts it, with Godard there is "no longer the single and central vision but a certain freedom of contradictions."[33]

Whereas the jump cut provides a disturbance in the relationship between two images, a second example would be a disturbance caused primarily through the internal montage of speech and image. As we saw with *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*, Godard experiments with various forms of speech-image codification, especially the use of off-screen voices and direct address. In each of these cases the harmony between the image and a speech act is broken in a way that the image is divided between two sources of enunciation, between subject-functions. One such sequence from *Contempt* (which I will analyze in depth later in this chapter) consists of a visual montage that includes shots of a lakeside path and the central female character (played by Brigitte Bardot) lying naked on a white-feather carpet. The woman is visually objectified while at the same time being given an alternative, voice-over subject-function. Her voice-over is, however, counteracted by that of her husband, and both voices are stripped of any agency as a result of the fact that they are repeated with no effect on the flow of visual expression, which is itself also looped with no necessary relation to the soundtrack (much as with the voice-over and organ in the opening sequence of *Last Year at Marienbad*).

The other kind of insert sequence used frequently by Godard is direct address, in what is usually an overt political message. Films such as *Pierrot le fou*, *Masculin féminin*, and *Week-end* use these inserts to freeze the narrative and to overturn the conventions of transparency maintained by fictional cinema. This leads Bordwell to write, "The central aspect of Godard's narrational process is self-conscious address to the audience."[34] But this self-consciousness is not only between the image and spectator; it implies all dimensions of the immanent field, including the content of representation and the larger, outlying structure of sociocultural values, beliefs, and conventions.

Moreover, this "self-conscious address" does not only come through the effect of direct address, or through references to film genre and history. Like Resnais, Godard makes the structure of film representation the very referent of his films by altering the level of signification set in

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the foreground. In both types of insert sequence mentioned here, for example, Godard subverts the formulation of a coherent denotation in order to produce a reflection on the connotative level of film. This is why he and Resnais complement each other so well, why they are such apt choices to illustrate the arguments of this book, and why they are so central to Deleuze's analysis, which I have argued is fundamentally an analysis of film connotation. This reflexivity is the driving force in the string of films Godard made between 1960 and 1968, beginning with *Breathless* and ending with *Week-end*. Always deeply engaged with contemporary social politics and cultural practices, Godard systematically directs this reflexive project of deconstruction toward the coded objectification of women in cinema. As Dixon points out: "The commodification of the human body (particularly the female body) becomes . . . the center of many of his key films."[35] I have argued in passing that this type of "commodification" is attached to the cinematic code of objectivity, and I will soon make it the centerpiece of a more specific example of film connotation, just as Godard makes it the centerpiece of his critique of film conventions.

This critique requires a revelation of the connotative base, a revelation that is particularly well achieved in *Contempt*, a film more explicitly about cinema than any other of Godard's films from this period. Arguing on Godard's behalf during a later period, when his films were more explicitly avant-garde, Wollen notes: "In his earlier films Godard introduced the cinema as a topic of his narrative"; yet, Wollen argues, not until his post-1968 Maoist period does Godard "show the camera on screen."[36] I will argue that this is not true, not in a metaphorical sense and not in a literal sense: Godard turns the camera on itself as early as 1963. Indeed, no film better illustrates the complexities enumerated thus far concerning Godard's work than *Contempt*, which takes place (both as a story and a production) amid two major cultural currents prominent in the 1950s and 1960s: the fall of the Hollywood studio system and the rise of mass-media pop culture, two institutions that are marked by the hypersexualized representation of women as objects. The cinematic dream, Godard shows us, is not just a collection of myths in the ephemeral stream of projected light but is based on the virtual play of desire and the visual consumption of skin and flesh—in a word, voyeurism, and I will argue here that voyeurism is based on a similar duality between viewing subject and viewed object as that which is used to connote cinematic objectivity.

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As Cavell notes, the formal themes of *Contempt* provide "a deep statement of the camera's presence." But, he continues, this carries with it "a statement from the camera about its subjects, about their simultaneous distance and connection, about the sweeping desert of weary familiarity."[37] In other words, much as in *The War Is Over* and the formalization of political action, there is a certain harmony here in the immanent field between the representation's process of organization and the diegetic world it is organizing. As such, this film offers the perfect opportunity to bring together the many strands of this book and to incorporate them at last into a specifically cinematic investigation of cinema.

Kino-Eye in the Mirror: *Contempt* and the Objective Subject

As a result of its complicated production and almost instant status as an important event in the film world, *Contempt* has inspired a unique critical history. Most analyses have chosen to focus somewhat redundantly on the film's detailed process of production, including its relation to the Alberto Moravia novel on which it is based, as well as enumerating its numerous intertextual references. The bulk of this work has come from what could be called the *Censier* group of film critics (due to the name given to University of Paris III, Censier, where they have all taught), including Jacques Aumont, Michel Marie, and Alain Bergala.[38] Such critics focus on detailed analysis of the text and have produced somewhat similar discourses on the importance of Moravia's book, of the deterioration of Godard's marriage to Anna Karina during this time, and of the significance of cast member Brigitte Bardot's extratextual star persona. This film is surprisingly absent from the wealth of formal or ideological analysis of Godard's oeuvre, however, including MacCabe's early criticism, the many essays Henderson devotes to Godard's deconstructive tendencies, and Wollen's attention to his countercinematic practices. I hope, therefore, to contribute something original here to the study of Godard's work, exploring the systematic and philosophical ramifications of the film's configurations of the immanent field.

Summarizing the extreme juxtapositions at the heart of *Contempt*, Godard writes: "Truth opposes itself to lies, wisdom to the clouded mind, a certain Greek smile made of intelligence and irony to the uncertain modern smile built from illusion and contempt."[39] With Godard this final

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juxtaposition has a double meaning: not only does he situate this film between Greek classicism and Occidental modernity, but also between classical Hollywood and modern cinema. Made in 1963, *Contempt* arrives at the very moment when the Hollywood studio system—"the vertically integrated monolith that Godard celebrated (after a fashion) in his earlier writings"[40]—was collapsing, and new means of production and representation were beginning to emerge. Having long been fascinated with Hollywood as an object of both admiration and critique, Godard provides in *Contempt* his final tribute to—and condemnation of—the classical film industry.

Godard achieves this by turning the camera on itself, producing a generative circle of signification that makes film representation both signifier and signified of the film and, thus, provides cinema with its own mirror phase, in which it identifies with itself as both producer of meaning and, also, sociocultural object that reflects popular ideology. This duplicity, I will argue, is central to the film's organizations, which can be formulated as a certain doubling of the immanent field. *Contempt* sets up a reflexive mode of representation in which the codes being used are themselves put under the scrutiny of the camera even while they are being used. The *mise-en-abyme* presented in the narrative is crucial to this, less so for its content—as it may be, for example, in Fellini's *8 1/2* (1963) or Truffaut's *Day for Night* (1973)—than for the semiotic structure used to reflect on its own forms or representation. *Contempt* conjures a signifying chain wherein wider social desires and modes of perception are both factors in, and products of, the structures of the film's images.

The basic premise of the film takes Godard's fascination with prostitution as a metaphor and transposes it onto the world of filmmaking. Paul (Michel Piccoli) is a screenwriter, working on a film version of Homer's *The Odyssey* to be directed by Fritz Lang (who plays himself). Paul's wife, Camille (played by Bardot, icon of the pop-culture world that Godard would later term the "civilization of the ass"),[41] becomes the sacrifice on Paul's altar of commercial success. To contract Paul to write the film, the producer, a quintessentially brutish American named Jeremy Prokosch (Jack Palance), demands that Paul offer him Camille in exchange. As Dixon writes, it is Paul's willingness to prostitute himself, and her as well, that leads to Camille's eponymous *contempt*.[42] This association between cinema and prostitution is the premise for the self-reflexive nature of the text, which brings to the surface a constant battle

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with the subtle nuance of cliché, implying its own inability to escape the very forms of representation that it hopes to dismantle—the most striking example being the objectification of women. The contrast between the centripetal and centrifugal forces at play in this system of signification, between the attempt to pull away from classical codes and the limitations of the form itself, is echoed by the film's reliance on the pattern of the spiral.

Much as we saw with *The War Is Over*, *Contempt* allows the fulfillment of codes and then denies them by revealing them as constructed organizations of subject-object relations. An aesthetic model for the constantly receding intimacy between Paul and Camille, the film unfolds in a series of what I will call spiral tracking shots. Also, there is a sort of vertigo established through the juxtaposition of long takes with the flattened image, bringing two paradigms of cinematic objectivity—the duration of the shot and the depth of the image—into direct conflict. Finally, Godard uses insert sequences to experiment with sound and image in order to fracture any single subject-function, sensory elements moving separately and each one revealing the fabricated nature of the other. All of these elements contribute to the doubled or self-contradicting structure of the immanent field, which permits the overlapping of subjective and objective poles and is grounded at all times in a reflexive revelation of its own connotative foundations.

Contempt opens with a very unconventional, and equally famous, credit sequence: a woman (who turns out to be the character Francesca, played by Giorgia Moll), reading from a movie script, walks slowly toward the camera. Beside her, Raoul Coutard (Godard's cinematographer) tracks alongside her as Godard's voice reads the credits on the voice-over. Coutard follows her with the camera until he arrives in the forefront of the image. Coutard begins turning toward the spectator as Godard says, citing Bazin: "cinema substitutes for our gaze a world in accord with our desires."[43] Then, as the camera faces the spectator (fig. 5.1), he concludes: "*Contempt* is the story of this world."

This shot has been thoroughly dissected by the *Censier* group, and I will only touch on it as an introduction to the film's connotative self-reflexivity, initiated here through the image of the lens itself. The shot of Coutard, being filmed while filming someone else, reveals the text as a fabrication. The apparatus is revealed: from the very beginning of the film, any claim to objectivity, neutrality, or detachment is destroyed.

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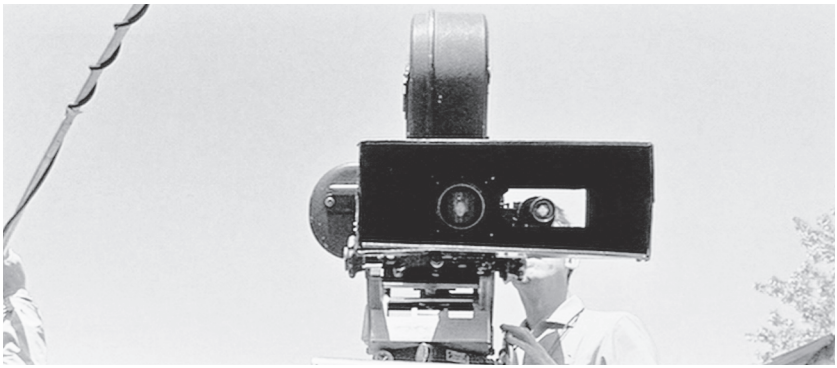

FIGURE 5.1
Raoul Coutard turns the camera of *Contempt* (1963) on the audience.

Moreover, it provides us with a paradigm for the film's doubled connotative structure: the differentiation provided between Coutard and the woman is doubled in the differentiation between the shot and Coutard. He is being posited as the object through the same process of differentiation in which he himself is engaged. This shot breaks the closed state of cinematic signification by turning the camera on the spectator, subverting conventional codes of suture and reversing the organization of subject-object relations that made Coutard the object of the representation. We find the immanent field to be contorted, doubled over on itself, in the process of which the world outside the film is implicated in the text's process.

A testament to how we look at and through the cinematic image, this organization of the immanent field aligns the desires of the public with the values to be connoted through the structure of representation. It offers, as Marc Cerisuelo puts it, "a veritable commentary at once on 'the state of things' and on the history of cinema."[44] In other words *Contempt* is a study of the signifying practices of the cinematic age, as well as a signification itself of a certain symbiosis between such codes and sociocultural modes of perception and representation. When Godard says that *Contempt* is "the story of this world," I would argue that he is referring to the story of cinema's attempt to accommodate and to codify—to represent and to affirm—the connotative roots of objectivity, the cinematic desire to learn the inside by showing the outside. The organization of subject-object relations that formulates this desire is a voyeuristic one,

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secreted into the illusion of empirical observation that is manifested in the immanent field according to the signification of a unilateral viewing subject—a fully formed philosophy sewn silently into the formal conventions of classical cinema. Moreover, the forward-thrusting extension of the empirical eye is a most phallic tool: the camera. As such, it is entirely fitting that the following scene consists of one long shot of Camille, naked and gleaming sensuously beneath the glare of multicolored lights, which shift from red to yellow to blue.

Lying in bed with her husband, Camille does a verbal inventory of her body, asking his approval as the shot tracks slowly across her outstretched form. "You like my breasts?" "Yes." This scene, which Kaja Silverman tellingly refers to as a "territorializing" process,[45] again doubles the immanent field on itself: the form of representation presents the contradiction of two inclusive signifying systems, incorporating codes of popular culture but also anticodes of experimental cinema. This conflict of signifying systems produces an unsettling effect of alienation, what Cerisuelo refers to as "a great violence . . . an 'unveiling' of the cinematographic rule."[46] This unveiling consists of a contradiction between different structures of representation. While the image of her body conjures an erotic impression, the effect of the lighting and the conversation contort this eroticism. Moreover, the coexistence within the immanent field of two discourses—the verbal taxonomy and the near-pornographic image—renders the erotic representation totally banal and cold, a result of the quotidian nature of this taxonomic verbal procedure, a verbal deeroticization used in other of Godard's films during this period.[47] Moreover, as she names her body parts there is no specific correspondence between the parts named and what fills the frame; this frustration of what I have called the cinematic nominative process produces a sort of lackadaisical effect, a "weary familiarity" as Cavell puts it, a boredom with clichéd eroticism that is implied by the denial of a singular subject-function that would be deriving pleasure from it.

This scene introduces the premise of the entire film (and, one might go so far to say, of Godard's oeuvre in general): a reflexive, highly stylistic investigation of "the mechanics of feminine/masculine power relationships" as they are manifested through cinematic codes.[48] In other words it presents the structure of representation as an extension of sexual difference. The mechanical eye of cinema is revealed as the extension of the viewing desire of a particular type of human: the *objectif* (the French

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term for "lens") has a very subjective, gender-based foundation. It has been argued by many feminist theorists (with whom I agree fully, though whose primarily psychoanalytic models I will not use), that the desire signified through classical film conventions connotes a heterosexual male desire to possess. Mulvey and others observe that the means of production in cinema have always been in male hands; as such, the eye of cinema has always been attached to a male libido.[49] This places the history of film form in a position of particular relevance to the phenomenological notion that "all knowledge involves objectification and in a certain sense the violation of the object,"[50] reminiscent of the Althusserian notion of empiricism noted in chapter1. I hope to frame this as a problem of subject-object relations, in which the acquisition of knowledge through unilateral possession is a connotative foundation of the code of objectivity. In *The System of Objects* Jean Baudrillard assesses this very scene in *Contempt* to illustrate his argument that objectification is generally central to the passion for, and possession of, both things and sexual beings. This description of what Baudrillard calls fetishism concludes it as being reliant on differentiation and domination: "not to be able to grasp the object of desire in its singular totality as a person, but only in its discontinuity."[51] A woman is not a woman, Baudrillard continues, but is—as has been codified through media conventions—a sum of fragmented parts, just as Camille describes herself. She has no subjectivity, having been reduced to an assemblage of objects.

At its foundation I believe that this voyeuristic tendency can be extended to the connotative conventions of the code of objectivity. Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit clarify Baudrillard's argument by pointing out that the act of looking turns the object of desire (sexual interest) into an object of fetish (erotic fascination).[52] Thus, the differentiation provided by the unilateral structure of the image itself exonerates the impulses of the viewing subject, mythologizing sexual objectification as objective representation. Godard manages to deconstruct this formal determination by fracturing the immanent field among numerous formal elements, numerous subject-functions—by, as Rancière might say, redistributing the sensible.

In the film as a whole Godard draws the connotative structure or organization of subject-object relations into the spotlight by juxtaposing two very different discursive paradigms, the classical and the modern, as we can see in the conflict posed between Fritz Lang's *The Odyssey* and *Con-*

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tempt itself. This duality, I argue, is integrated into the juxtaposition between two forms of representation, which define their significations through their relative organization of subject-object relations. By way of introduction Cerisuelo helps to demarcate a certain aspect of modern cinema in the film's aesthetics and syntax: "The film demonstrates its modernity, at once both radical and mastered, in its combination of sequence-shots (or long shots), lateral tracking shots, and its connections of movement."[53] In other words we can look for the film's underlying significance in the interrelationships of its formal elements, in the structure of its immanent field. Godard, for example, constantly undermines the fly-on-the-wall implications of the long take, directing our attention toward the fact that the immanent field is, in fact, a construction of relations.

This acknowledgment of the limitations of the formal base is part of a larger network through which Godard appropriates technical aspects of the code of objectivity, only to reveal the apparatus as nonobjective, selective, motivated by connotative structures. This network includes the spiral tracking shot, the flattened image, and the insert sequence. The first of these, the spiral tracking shot, which composes nearly every outdoor scene in the film, begins in front of moving characters, moves slowly with the characters, allows them to pass, and follows momentarily. Then it cuts to reestablish itself once again in front. Through its motion and organization of space this shot connotes a particular relationship between the camera and the objects it films. Giving the impression that it is curling around, thus containing the objects, in the end it always jumps to slightly outside of this curve, breaking the impression of containment. It follows no particular character, allowing them each to ebb and flow in and out of the image. The shot then cuts to a different position, however, following the action; through such cuts we are made aware of the form's determinations of the immanent field.

This thematic shot is the quintessence of the notion of the "*ballade*" that Deleuze uses to describe Godard's films: a tendency of his characters to walk without direction, rambling lack of narrative focus, and a resistance to conventional film aesthetics, each of which is manifested through perpetual and seemingly aimless movement.[54] This lack of narrative focus is founded on a refusal of conventional subject-object relations. Much like the shifts in the speech-image code analyzed in chapter 3, the tracking shot—with Godard as with Resnais—refuses to grant a dominant

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agency to either the camera or the characters. They move together, then disperse. The camera watches, then participates, then watches again. The image is neutral, then engaged, then neutral: the immanent field, as a structure of subject-object relations, is constantly in a state of fluctuation between subjective and objective poles of representation.

The spiral tracking shot has a less mobile, miniature version in the enclosed shift. This device, in which the camera moves only slightly from one character to another, separates people who are otherwise positioned closely to each other, producing an alienation between visible objects such as we saw in *Vivre sa vie*. This visual device is perhaps most prevalent in a scene that takes place between Paul and Camille in their apartment, a twenty-minute conversation consisting mainly of two long takes, and in the course of which the camera is constantly revealed as an inefficient witness. At one particular moment Paul and Camille speak to each other from across a table. The camera slowly tracks from one to the other, in no way following the dialogue or any other causal logic, in no way provoked or provoking. It is a mood, as Cavell puts it, a dissociation of feeling. In this scene Camille finally tells Paul that she no longer loves him, a sentiment symbolized by the cold space that exists between the two characters. As opposed to Bazin's objective camera, this is one that cannot restore the unity of the reality in front of it. Moreover, the structure of representation is infused with a formal detachment from its objects, a detachment that prefigures—as opposed to being determined by—what is actually happening in the story.

As mentioned above, these connotative significations are all the more accentuated by being juxtaposed against the form of Lang's *The Odyssey*, which includes many shots of statues. Lang's film is composed primarily of rapid semicircular rotating shots, in which the camera performs a quick 180-degree turn around immobile granite characters. Whereas the characters of *Contempt* seem to move constantly, the characters of *The Odyssey* are sedentary. Instead, the *camera* moves quickly around *them*, giving the impression that the statues are moving: objects brought to life by the mobility of the camera subject (fig. 5.2).

The classical camera of mythical gods is distinctly rhetorical and relies functionally on the clear-cut division between viewing subject and viewed object. The difference between this and the camera of *Contempt* becomes particularly relevant in the doubling of the immanent field, such as occurs in brief cuts to Lang's images at crucial stages of Paul's

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FIGURE 5.2
Statues are the characters of *Contempt*'s film-within-a-film, Fritz Lang's *The Odyssey*.

neglect for—and loss of—Camille. This juxtaposition of image-types helps to organize the immanent field as the meeting place, as Godard might put it, between the classical and the modern, a fluctuation between subject-object dynamics that aligns Godard with a modern shift in philosophical history.

Godard uses these two styles of filming to construct two different worlds—one that is stable and coherently based on a precise differentiation between subject and object, and another that is unstable and dialogic. In illustrating these two worlds, this film presents the juxtaposition between two different connotative systems. This thematic doubling of the immanent field is affirmed by the rejection of depth-of-field in the long take. The best example of this is when Paul, having seen Camille kiss Prokosch and having realized he has lost her, follows her down the steps to the sea in Capri. They are constantly moving toward the camera, but the flattened image means that they hardly displace themselves—they literally *go nowhere*—as they descend. In this mutation of aesthetic codes, the flattened image corrupts the objective realism of the long take for which Bazin praises the works of Renoir. The denoted space between them is condensed, as if to draw attention to it as a product of connotation. The "mood" of this shot is further accentuated moments later: Camille, swimming in the background, appears very close to Paul, as the background and foreground are not divided through depth. This juxtaposition of formal elements produces an immanent field both shared and empty, as Paul and Camille share an ambiguous space, which—

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much like the enclosed pan—accentuates all the more the tragic divide between them.

The flattened image will, in Godard's films after *Contempt*, become a main fixture in his formal repertoire. This effect subverts the connotative structure that depth-of-field offers and resists the formation of a visual configuration that would offer the viewer the illusion of natural perception. Arnheim discusses the difference between the two-dimensional form and the three-dimensional illusion of the image as being one that accentuates the "unreality of the film picture."[55] This unreality is anathema to the code of objectivity. Moreover, Arnheim argues that the flattened image makes it so that the "purely formal qualities of the picture come into prominence," thus producing an "anti-functional effect."[56] In other words the connotative foundation is brought into focus, and the immanent field is liberated from any pretense toward denotation. The form draws attention to its own constructed nature and thus draws our attention to the very fact that it is awkward, unconventional. The flattened image ironically makes us aware of the space that separates us from the object of vision, as opposed to this space being naturalized and, thus, going unnoticed. *Contempt* is a constant meditation on ways of looking, how the space traversed between subject and object is organized to articulate larger relational problems. As such, conjuring principles of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology discussed in chapter 1, Sylvie Ayme argues that this film "presents before us . . . the world as a common site even of vision."[57]

This communal site for vision is one that is dominated, according to Godard and many others, by the gaze as an extension of certain structures of power. *Contempt* could thus be analyzed as a film about the spectator—and the spectatorial position—during the age of cinema, embodied in the film by the character of Jeremy Prokosch. Prokosch *is* Hollywood, an industry geared to suit the desires of customers like him and fully certain in the philosophy that emanates from the connotations of the images he enjoys, the worldview he values. Moreover, he embodies the unilateral notion of subjectivity used to construct classical forms of narrative linearity. "Although he is repellent," Dixon asserts, "Prokosch is in control of his life,"[58] and thus his gaze is different from that of Paul, a castrated modern antihero whose subjective agency is bereft of the apparatus's support. These two gazes, two different image-philosophies, are constantly at odds, evidence once again of a doubling of the immanent field.

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There is only one occasion on which *Contempt* implies a fully subjective representation: when Paul and Camille go to Prokosch's villa for the first time, and Prokosch makes clear his intentions. In this scene there is a moment when Bardot turns and looks at the camera; this is followed by a shot of Prokosch, staring at her. For this moment we are looking through his gaze, and Camille is the object of that gaze. But, as in the rest of the film, there is a doubling here between the classical and the subversive: while the eye-line match functions to suture us into Prokosch's subject-position, this suturing is demystified by Camille's staring directly into the camera (as opposed to her looking just to the side of the camera, as would occur according to classical convention). This cut presents a clash of image-types, one of which is based on the denotation of a looking subject and the other of which is based on revealing the connotation of this suture. Charged thus with opposing agencies, the immanent field becomes the site of struggle for dominance of this film's orders of meaning: a struggle of the experimental with the clichés of classical cinema, with the image of woman at stake.

This struggle also underpins an insert sequence in which Paul and Camille separately express their remorse in voice-over tracks. In each case the images shift between the erotic (Camille naked and outstretched) and the sentimental (a lakeside path) (figs. 5.3–5.5). The voice-overs alternate without clear logical connection to the images, as if transposing the connotative structure of the enclosed shift onto the speech-image code—they never quite seem in the same place at the same time. Silverman analyzes this scene, understandably, as an indication of what both Paul and Camille have lost: Camille's body.[59] I will view it, however, as a nondenotative reference. It is, instead, the decomposition of formal structures of differentiation and the crisscrossing of subject-functions: a revelation of film as an arena for the construction of subjectivity, an immanent field that is opened up all the wider as Camille, naked and outstretched on her stomach, lifts her head and stares into the camera.

Concerning this sequence, Bordwell writes: "we cannot be sure whether the voice-over phrases directly express the characters or are simply the narrator's mimicry."[60] Following the thread of his general analysis of art cinema, Bordwell insists that the guiding effect of Godard's work is the self-conscious articulation of the artist's narratorial voice. However, while the collation of spoken discourse and visual image remains ambiguous,

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FIGURES 5.3–5.5
With sound and image derailed, a naked Camille (Brigitte Bardot) looks directly at the camera.

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there is no reason to conjecture any voice other than the voices of the characters, who struggle—as throughout the film, as in *Last Year at Marienbad*—over the production of meaning both within the diegesis and in the organization of subject-object relations.

That is to say, the sources of the voices are identifiable, familiar. Bordwell does help, however, to point out a certain interaction here, within the immanent field, between the signifying agents of different sources, different sensory elements and formal sets of relations. This question of enunciation returns us to the earlier problem of language and meaning in cinema, or the problem of the aural subject, a problem that functions in this film not only as a question of the unfolding of images but also as a diegetic question concerning the production of representation. The problem of struggling speech acts and the origin of meaning is central to *Contempt* as a production, a story, and a set of images—in other words, as an immanent field, a philosophical experiment with film form. Shot and recorded in four languages, the film alternates primarily between English and French, though both Italian and German are used regularly. The only character who speaks all of these languages is Francesca, Prokosch's secretary. As such, she is solely responsible for the possibility of communication among the different characters. Thus, in a way she is the ultimate bearer of meaning, but this subject-function is denied by her naturalized sociocultural status as a woman, which relegates her to a particular function in the world of cinema. This is similar for Camille: even when her voice-over controls the aural track, her body is visually laid out before us as an erotic object. Yet she looks into the camera, making us realize that this objectification is self-conscious, intentional, and thus connotative of something beyond the titillating image of nudity that Prokosch will giggle at when watching the rushes for his own film.

This image of Bardot's Camille, naked, looking into the lens, goes further and comes closer than any other film discussed here to implicating the spectator and the external sociocultural world in the dynamic organization of the immanent field. Reiterating a problem I pointed to earlier in this chapter, this exemplifies Godard's struggle to find a form that at once defies and also reflects critically on the conventional objectification of women. Geneviève Sellier describes this struggle: "an oscillation between the will to rupture with the dominant schema which constructs the female character as an object of desire for the masculine gaze, and an

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exhibition of this schema, as much on the level of dialogue and situations as in the mise-en-scène and procedures of enunciation."[61]

The doubling of the immanent field in *Contempt* is exemplary of Godard's films during this period, revealing each image's "mark of cinema-ness" as Christian Metz puts it.[62] Yet this cannot be accomplished without appropriating in some way the cliché that one is trying to destroy. That is to say, conventional and subversive cinemas are constructed from the same immanent field, and a film text exists in a constant flux that has the potential to transform and to become something new, something different or polyvalent, to whatever degree it is allowed to escape the conventions established in classical paradigms. We can see in this image of Bardot where the denotation seems to imply a conventional use of cinematic objectivity; yet, on the connotative level, the detached and neutral subject of this objective gaze has already been revealed as a fabrication, thus doubling the immanent field as a self-deconstructive site for the interaction of different codes and discourses.

I would argue, then, that we consider Godard's mode of ethnography less as a means for describing what is being looked at than a means for revealing our society's ways of looking at things and, more fundamental to my problem here, the organizing process through which film structures this gaze as a composition of subject-object relations. This experiment in cinematic thinking extends the philosophical weight of cinema's subject-object mutations to a specific sociopolitical problem, offering us a looking glass through which this study can both conclude and open a door to wider and more specific vistas.